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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 000860

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SUBJECT: SUDAN/DARFUR: SPECIAL ENVOY WILLIAMSON'S APRIL 14
MEETING WITH SLM LEADER ABDUL WAHID AL NUR

REF: PARIS 741

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Classified By: Acting Political Counselor William Jordan, 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Sudan Special Envoy Richard Williamson met with SLM/AW leader Abdul Wahid Al Nur and his associate Ahmed Abdalla in Paris on April 14 as part of a three-track approach to making progress in Sudan. USG objectives are to: 1) engage with the Government of Sudan (GOS) on improving U.S.-Sudan relations; 2) explore punitive measures should there be no progress generally with respect to Darfur; and 3) encourage Darfur rebel movements not participating in the AU/UN-led peace negotiations to do so in order to achieve a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Darfur. Al Nur asked the U.S. to pressure the UN to complete UNAMID's deployment and to ensure that UNAMID carried out its Chapter 7 mandate to protect the people of Darfur. He also called for direct USG intervention to weaken GOS military capabilities, or to provide his movement with equipment and resources that would allow it to protect its people. Al Nur stated that he was willing to compromise and negotiate with the GOS, but only once a minimum level of security existed; he was not otherwise willing to compromise the fate of his people. He hoped for an invitation to the U.S. or elsewhere to continue the dialogue with the USG. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Special Envoy for Sudan Richard Williamson, accompanied by USUN Jana Chapman Gates and AF/SPG Olukemi Yai (notetaker), met with SLM/AW leader Abdul Wahid Al Nur in Paris on April 14. Ahmed Abdalla, Al Nur's Toronto-based associate, also attended the meeting. Reftel reports SE Williamson's meeting the same day with French officials; septel reports his April 15 meeting with a JEM delegation.

A MINIMUM LEVEL OF SECURITY, NOT
100 PERCENT, AND I'LL COME TO THE TABLE

¶3. (C) The recent violence in Darfur, the 15 people killed near UNAMID headquarters in EL Fasher, the murder of the chief of the Abu Shouk camp, the burned villages in Nyala, El Geneina, and the continued GOS Antonov airstrikes in the Jebel Marra all demonstrated increased insecurity, Al Nur stated. When AL Nur last met SE Williamson in Geneva, he called for a minimum level of security as a condition for participation in negotiations. UNAMID's lack of reaction to the killings and its unwillingness to provide a semblance of

security to the people were unacceptable and not conducive to negotiations. Al Nur lamented that, if going to the table could bring peace, the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) would have accomplished that. In response to SE Williamson, Al Nur intimated that the GOS was using the attacks on the villages and camps as a pressure tactic to force IDPs to return home. According to Al Nur, there were 27,000 IDPs in the camps the GOS had surrounded and was trying to "clean" in order to convince the international community they did not exist. He said that going to the table while these atrocities were taking place would be tantamount to legitimizing the killing of his people.

¶4. (C) Al Nur repeatedly claimed a minimum level of security required a robust Chapter 7 UN force willing and able to protect the people, and not simply a cease-fire agreement. Al Nur was, however, unable to specify what would constitute a minimum level of security or what steps were necessary that would allow him to engage in political dialogue with the GOS.

THE TIME IS RIGHT, NO STRINGS ATTACHED

¶5. (C) SE Williamson impressed upon Al Nur the need to seize the current small window of opportunity. The GOS had recently made a sincere overture to the U.S. in an attempt to improve relations. SE Williamson noted USG skepticism, given Khartoum's history of broken promises, but he underscored the need to exploit this critical opportunity when the GOS might be ready to move on Darfur. On the one hand, the Darfur conflict was bleeding the NCP domestically and internationally. On the other hand, the GOS hoped that President Bush might take a number of very bold steps to improve U.S.-Sudan relations as his administration drew to a close. SE Williamson cited as an example the USG decision to improve relations with Libya after it chose to abandon its

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various WMD programs.

¶6. (C) SE Williamson urged Al Nur to participate in a political discussion of ways to achieve peace in Darfur, with no strings attached. He suggested that Al Nur could reasonably seek certain guarantees, which could include an end to the violence, a mechanism for a political role for the leader of the Fur, appropriate leadership positions consistent with the Fur majority, the unity of the three states, guarantees of increased autonomy for Darfur, and better representation in Khartoum in both the executive branch and the parliament. SE Williamson underlined the importance for Al Nur to receive guarantees for a voluntary return of IDPs and their participation in future decision-making through a political mechanism. SE Williamson emphasized that the U.S. would like Al Nur to meet and talk, without an expectation that he would sign an agreement. The U.S. was asking Al Nur to send a message to his people that, despite his lack of trust in the GOS and its possible unwillingness to implement any agreement that might emerge from negotiations, he would be willing to engage in dialogue because of concern for his people and to end their suffering.

"WAIT-AND-SEE" APPROACH MIGHT RESULT
IN DARFUR TURNING INTO ANOTHER 21-YEAR WAR

¶7. (C) SE Williamson tried to dissuade Al Nur from adopting a "wait-and-see approach" and from making calculations based on his expectations of the incoming U.S. administration. SE Williamson explained that this tactic gave false hopes because new administrations were often preoccupied by issues they inherited and that it could take up to two years before a new administration set its priorities, adopted policies, and then began engagement. SE Williamson warned Al Nur that we could not afford to wait or speculate on the future while Darfuris were suffering. He emphasized that if this window of opportunity, when the GOS was willing to explore possibilities and was eager to improve relationship with the

USG, were missed and a solution not found soon, the Darfur conflict could turn into another long war, similar to the 21-year North-South conflict. President Bush cared deeply about Darfur and wanted to see progress. To best use today's small window of opportunity, all sides needed to identify ways to resolve the conflict.

"WE LOVE OUR PEOPLE: THEIR PLIGHT CANNOT BE COMPROMISED"

18. (C) Al Nur repeatedly claimed he wanted a secular democratic and liberal Sudan, with religion separated from politics. He asserted that he had made a promise to the people and could not fail them. In response to SE Williamson's remark that pressure might later be applied on him should dialogue fail, he replied "SLM/AW's tactic can change, but the main strategy and objective will always remain the same. The plight of the people cannot be compromised." Al Nur reiterated that he was not ready to negotiate, and as a freedom fighter, was ready to die anywhere for the cause of his people. He also responded that for him the issue was not U.S. persuasion or pressure but a minimum level of security for the people on the ground.

19. (C) Al Nur emphasized that he enjoyed popular support because his supporters knew that he had their interests at heart. He chided SE Williamson for singling out the Fur in discussing leadership, noting that previous SE Andrew Natsios had used a similar tactic, which only complicated matters. Al Nur claimed he was not interested in dividing but rather in bringing people together. He had even reached out to the Janjaweed in his attempt to search for a collective solution. He informed SE Williamson that SLM/AW had no other option but to respect its promises to the people. More than any offer of office in the presidency, he placed value in his people, saying "What about the people? We love our people, with true love, and we promised we will help them." He reemphasized SLM/AW's pro-USG and pro-democratic stance, and that its long-term objective remained a secular, democratic, and liberal Sudan. "But today, the focus is on the people, and it would be inappropriate when our sisters are being raped to make a deal with the government." Al Nur also pointed out Minni Minawi's plight; per Al Nur, Minni was unable "to feed a single person" in Darfur today despite signing the DPA.

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CONFUSION: "DOESN'T THE U.S. BELIEVE
IN OUR CAUSE? WE ARE NATURAL ALLIES"

10. (C) Al Nur deplored the fact that Darfur was compared to other conflicts, although in his view it was a very unique conflict. He claimed confusion on his part and wanted clarification as to why the U.S. was not more engaged in Darfur. He marveled at the U.S. ability to spend "one trillion dollars in Iraq to create friends" while the U.S. neglected the situation in Darfur, where the people were its natural allies on many fronts in fighting against terrorism and with respect to human rights and democracy in Sudan. He asked if perhaps the U.S. did not believe in Darfur's cause. SE Williamson replied that the U.S. was the only government willing to call the conflict in Darfur "genocide" and had been intensely engaged both politically and financially for years. He further clarified that Sudan received the fifth largest amount of U.S. support and the most in sub-Saharan Africa. To underscore our commitment, Williamson cited the efforts the U.S. had undertaken, including intense efforts to accelerate UNAMID's deployment (with an intended further 9,000 troops in place by the end of 2008), his letter to UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon, and the USD 100 million to train and equip African troop-contributing countries, in addition to the USD 400 million spent in building camps for AMIS.

AL NUR'S BOTTOM LINE: "DISABLE THE GOS'S
CAPABILITY TO BOMB OUR PEOPLE OR GIVE
US THE EQUIPMENT TO PROTECT OUR PEOPLE"

¶11. (C) Though Al Nur agreed that the U.S. had given a lot to Sudan since President Reagan's administration, he insisted that the U.S. could do a lot more. Abdalla and Al Nur believed Darfur needed a peacemaking rather than a peacekeeping operation. They also believed coercive action was the only way to stop the GOS policy of seeking a military solution to Darfur and to improve security on the ground. Elaborating, Al Nur urged the U.S. to continue pushing for a rapid deployment of a robust Chapter 7 UNAMID willing to protect Darfuris. He requested that the U.S. weaken the GOS capacities by striking directly at its military capability. Alternatively, he suggested that the U.S. help protect Darfuris by providing SLM/AW with equipment and military assistance. SE Williamson assured Al Nur that providing SLM/AW with equipment and military assistance and neutralizing the GOS military were not options. SE Williamson agreed on the need to achieve security on the ground but stated that that would be difficult absent a political agreement. He solicited Al Nur's views on how to achieve security.

COLLABORATE TO FIND WAYS TO ACHIEVE SECURITY

¶12. (C) SE Williamson concluded the meeting by reiterating that the U.S. interest was not in pressuring the rebel movements or their leaders but rather in seeking steps that would lead to stopping the killing and finding a sustainable peace in Darfur. He solicited proactive and practical steps, beyond theories, that could bring about a resolution to the conflict. He invited Al Nur to flesh out with him the step-by-step measures that could be taken to effect stability on the ground. He expressed the USG's desire to explore specific steps that could be taken on security. Progress on security would increase the effectiveness of any eventual political dialogue. He reminded Al Nur of the need to take advantage of the current window of opportunity and to exploit it to find a way to stop the killing of innocents. SE Williamson said he was willing to wait a month for Al Nur to provide his suggestions on the best way forward.

¶13. (C) Al Nur responded by reaffirming his appreciation to the U.S., his commitment to finding a political solution to the conflict, and his willingness to participate in political dialogue once a minimum level of security was established. He said he was looking forward to continuing the dialogue and hoped he would be invited the U.S. or to another suitable venue to continue his discussions with SE Williamson.

¶14. (U) SE Williamson's office has cleared this message.

¶15. (U) Minimize considered.

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